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Interview with Lawrence Appley

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Lawrence Appley

(Interviewed on 24 October 1991, Hamilton, NY)

Video Rolls #11-12

Q: *Your name and spelling, title?*

APPLEY: Lawrence, L-A-W-A. Appley. A-P-P-L-E-Y.
And I'm currently Chairman Emeritus of the American
Management Association.

Q: *How do you know Joe?*

APPLEY : Well, I'm trying to figure. I think I met Joe
probably -- well, let me think It'd been 1950? And he was
active in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and
so was. L We were both in the management division of that.
And he was very active in AMA. He was a teacher in some
of the courses. He led some of the seminars. He wrote
articles. Very active. He was a vice president and AMA and
in charge of its -- I think it was the manufacturing division.
He was in charge of that.

And our closest contact was in AMA's most popular
program which was their management course. That was a
four weeks course. And I handled the first week of it, and I
think he handled the third week of it. He handled one week
of the four.

And, boy, he was Joe to everybody.

Q: *In 1950 you were younger than today.*

APPLEY: Yeah.

Q: *What was your first impression?*

APPLEY: Well, I was always Larry. I don't think anybody ever called me Lawrence but my mother, and she did it for 96 or thereabouts. But now your question I lost.

Q: *Your first meeting. What reputation preceded him. What was he like the first time you met him?*

APPLEY: Well, when I met him, he was a professor at New York University. And he came to us a member of our manufacturing division council. I don't recall who brought him in.

I hope that doesn't happen while you're running the picture. You can cut it out. Yeah.

But he -- you knew from the moment you met Joe that he was probably the leader in his subject matter. Quality control was his trademark. And you just knew from the moment you met him -- he didn't have to open his mouth -- that you were going to meet somebody that knew what he was talking about. And 'the experiences he'd had.

Always modest. A very good leader. He -- well, I guess I've already answered your question with my first impression.

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION)

Q: *In the '50's why did AMA focus on quality?*

APPLEY: Well, the greatest asset of the American Management Association is its planning councils. We have 15 divisions representing the various major activities of a business or an organization. And we have about, oh, around 30 to 40 of the top people in the subject matter.

For example, a marketing council, has the -- has 40 of the top marketing people in the country on the council. And the manufacturing council would have the top manufacturing people of the country. And they come together twice a year,

and their purpose is to tell us what they would pay to send their people to listen to it.

What were the problems that were bothering them; what was the subject matter they wanted to talk about.

And the heat was coming on quality control. And I'm not sure that Joe Juran wasn't responsible for that. And that's the way we learned about the subject and got into it.

But we've always been noted for being very practical in what we put on.

Q: What were his seminars like? How well attended? The kind of people who would hear him?

APPLEY: Well, they're operating executives. And when I became president in 19 hundred and 48, we had six events and about -- oh -- maybe 20,000 people at big conferences. And now they have, I guess, 100,000 events, probably 90,000 people attending. And they're active operating executives.

Now, a seminar -- rather -- a course and a conference are for purposes of imparting information. A seminar is for the purpose of exchanging experience. And a laboratory is for the purpose of learning the skill.

And in the seminar, you wanted people to come who had experiences they could exchange on the subject matter, on the problem. We let them know in advance what the problems were going to be discussed. Unless they'd let us know, and then we'd let the members know.

But quality was a new subject back in those days. And Joe was beating the woods on it. He was very good.

Q: How was attendance at Joe's courses or seminars or laboratories?

APPLEY: What was the attendance?

Q: At Joe Juran's seminars?

APPLEY: Well, we wouldn't run one with less than 15 people. And I'd say the -- we never went over probably 30. And Joe's -- as far as I can remember -- were always full. There was no problem about that

Q: *Why was that?*

APPLEY: Well, Joe was well known before he came with AMA, very well known, to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He was very active in their management division. And we didn't make him famous; he was already well known.

Those were the days of, oh, a lot of those famous management experts. And we had them on the program. I'm trying to think of the most prolific writer on management. You'd know what his name is. Huh? Yes.

Peter Drucker. Peter was very well known back in those days and a very frequent speaker at our affairs, conferences, courses. And we didn't make him famous; he was known.

Q: *What was it like being his colleague?*

APPLEY: I don't know how to distinguish that Joe was very knowledgeable, very friendly. He was a good man to work with. And you knew he was going to make a good contribution to the session. So if you fell on your face, at least he'd save it. And he was very nice to work with, very good man to work with.

Q: *Have you ever seen his humor?*

APPLEY: I've seen it, but I don't know that I could remember it. It was salty, and appropriate, and usually, if he told a joke, it made a point in connection with whatever the discussion was.

But I don't know that he told so many jokes; he just exercised his humor with the remarks he'd make.

Q: What has been his greatest contribution?

APPLEY: Professional management is a conscious, orderly, human approach to the performance of management responsibility, as contrasted with a hit-or-miss, day in/day out, leave-it-to-chance approach. And Joe was very orderly, very well organized.

And, aside from the subject matter, the way he handled it, the way he presented it, the way he himself did his work at the university and talked about it was, in itself, a good motivation, a good inspiration.

And -- that's about all I can say on that.

Q: What about his greatest contribution?

APPLEY: His greatest contribution. Well it had to be quality control. That -- when you said Joe Juran, you said quality control. And he made a great contribution to other countries. He spoke in Europe at some of our sessions. And, very highly thought of.

And probably his greatest contribution was quality control on the production line. He wanted the workers who produced the product to exercise the quality control on it, and not let the employee let anything go by that was not up to standard.

And probably there was more emphasis on -- on the inspector than there was on the employee inspection. And Joe made the employee very responsible for the quality of his work.

Q: What would you say to a TV manager who said, who 's Joe Juran?

APPLEY: Well, the Japanese have made quality very famous. They are famous for taking what someone else has created and make it better and make it cheaper. And they have made quality -- you notice how Ford makes it, number one, and Chrysler talks about it, they all talk about quality.

And they never used to do that in their advertising. But Joe has made it a popular subject. And it is a very popular subject. And Joe is the outstanding authority on it today. And I would think people would want to listen to it, readily.

Q: You worked with him when he was traveling to Japan.

APPLEY: Yes.

Q: Juran and Deming were in Japan. Who did what in the 1950s?

. APPLEY: Deming was probably a better public relations person for himself than Joe was. Joe was not interested in reaction to him. He was not interested in the publicity he got. He was interested in helping the people who were listening. He had something to give them.

What I know of Deming's work, I see an awful lot of Juran in it, and I see Deming get credit for a lot of things that Joe did, a lot of the things that Joe said.

So maybe I wandered away from your question.

But Deming came out of Japan an idol of the Japanese; a hero. There are statues to him all over Japan. We have a group of Japanese -- some 40 or 50 -- come here every year for a week And it's Deming they talk about when they come here. And what they've learned about management. Until we tell them where quality control really started and what it was all about.

But Deming's done a ve~good job in self publicity. And -- he made a contribution. But he's a -- well, there are a lot of them.

You know, I remember a story of a speaker who was introduced as having written a book And afterwards, a member of the audience came up and he said: I read the advertisement on your book. I got your book. I read your book I wish the guy that wrote the advertisement had written the book

And you hear a lot of people speaking on subjects and writing on subjects they don't know as much about as other people do. But they do it very well

(END OF TAPE 10, START TAPE 11)

Q: What credit did Deming get for Juran's work?

APPLEY: Well, I'm trying to think. I was never in Japan. I never knew what he said and taught in Japan. I knew what he said and taught here.

And, if you would ask me what his most important contribution is anywhere, he put meaning into the word, quality. What are you talking about when you talk about quality. When you talk about quality in an automobile, quality in a TV set, quality -- what are you talking about

And he made that very vivid, that quality was something you felt, you saw, you experienced. and there's a lot of difference between the same products made by different people.

I was the director of the Harris Corporation for a long time, for 34. years, in fact -- 24 years. And they make television equipment. And it is their ambition to make the best; it always had been. They want to be number one.

And I was working with a television studio at a college where their equipment had been given to them as second hand by other people. It was old stuff. It was 15, 20 years old. But they were a good crew.

And so I asked them, I said: if you were buying new equipment for this studio, what would you buy? And right away, they said, Harris is the top of the art. And I was happy about that, so I bought them three cameras. But they meant something when they said top of the art.

I drive a particular car -- I don't know that you want me to advertise it -- but I drive a particular kind of car. And this is the fourth model I've had of that car. And, as far as I'm concerned, there's just no other car like it. And people who

ride in it comment immediately upon the quality of the riding, the quietness. These are quality aspects.

Q: What's the connection between him and his work and the car that you drive?

APPLEY: What's the connection between them? Well, in order to answer that question, I'd have to name the car. But the company is very conscious of quality, and more so than any other car company I know. And whether they have anything to do with Joe Juran, I don't know. But I do know that they're very conscious of what quality is, and I know Joe made people understand what quality is.

Q: He gave AMA courses in the early '50's.

APPLEY: Yes.

Q: What took so long to catch on to what he said?

APPLEY: Competition. Japanese competition. The Japanese made products better than we did. And Joe Juran had considerable influence on them. I say, I can't tell you specifically because I never was over there. But he contributed a great deal and so did Deming.

I don't know how closely Deming and Joe worked together. I don't know whether they ever did work together. But they both made a considerable contribution. And the contribution is: what is quality, what is it.

It's what causes people to come back and do business with you again because they were well pleased the first time. That's quality.

Q: When you think of Joe, what movie do you see?

APPLEY: A very, very fine intelligent person that you can't be associated with without being better for it. So that

every opportunity you would have to be with him, the better you're going to be because of it.

I have a motto, or a principle, that I believe in deeply, that every human contact is a source of personal enrichment. And every contact with Joe Juran is a source of personal enrichment. And that's Joe. When I think of him, he's enriching.

Q: Can you give a time that defines him?

APPLEY: Oh, I wish I could. Unfortunately, when Joe and I participated in the same program, it was at different times. So I didn't hear him personally as much as I read him. And I can't think of any -- I wish I could help you on that, but I can't.

Q: Have you spent much time in his company?

APPLEY: In his company? Never. No. Never. The only place I ever spent any time with Joe, other than AMA, was at New York University, in his classes there.

Q: Were you a student of his?

APPLEY: No. I just went down to visit -- matter of interest. He invited me.

Q: Do you remember that first meeting?

APPLEY: No, I don't. I wish I did. But, you know Joe is like a river. He just flows on and on and on. You don't know where it starts, you don't know where it ends. You just know it's rich. And there's always water in it. . And it's always for good use.

And I couldn't tell you the first time I was ever on the Hudson River. I was born on it, lived on it, and love it. But I couldn't tell you any particular incident in relation to it

Q: Which of his ideas do you carry with you?

APPLEY: Well, I have a -- my favorite course is a course on Communicating for Productivity.

And the theme of it is that the more skillfully I can clarify for my workers what they're supposed to do, and how well they're supposed to do it, and how well they are doing it, and how they can do it better -- the more skillfully I do that, the better they will perform.

They can't help it, because I'm working on their mental images up there, up in the mind. And this is what controls their action. The mind controls the body. And so the image that you plant up there controls what the body does.

And, well, that's skill. Clarify work. Clarify how it should be done. Clarify how well it should be done. And then be sure that your people understand how well it is being done. And they have some plan for doing it better. That's Joe.

Now, I frequently say: great truths can't be patented or copyrighted, it's the process by which you apply them that can be copyrighted. So that when I -- Joe and I quote some basic truth, we're not plagiarizing, because it didn't belong to either one of us. It just came out of our experience, out of our exposure.

See, the mind is a -- probably the greatest data bank there is in any computer. And piled into it are what you read, what you see, what you hear -- all of that's being poured into this bank. But it can't be used unless it's programmed. Therefore, you have to make a process out of it and get that image in your mind, and use it.

And probably, Joe has had as much to do with my belief in that as anybody.

Q: What feedback did you get from his attendees?

APPLEY: Well, AMA has a regular forum. And they ask basic questions. But then they have a bar for rating from one

to 20. Twenty is high and one is low. And where do you rate this speaker. Where do you rate the subject matter. And Joe was always 18, 19, 20, right up in the top -- always.

As far as AMA was concerned, Joe helped us on two things particularly: that was the number of people who attended the session. We always had to watch that because it took about 14 or 15 people to pay for the session, and the rest of it went right down to the bottom line, every additional registration.

So the fact that Joe was filling up his session was just pure gold. It went right to the bottom line.

And then second, we watched those ratings. What were the ratings. And if we got anything in 19, 20, we were all right. If we got down below 16, we were worried. And there wasn't any concern about Joe. He was never down there.

Joe was a -- when he was leading the session, he didn't give you the impression you get in a college course of a professor and a class. He was one of the group. He came right down in the group.

We have the largest round table in the world. It's 28 feet across. But it's open in the center. and there is a lectern up in the front. And Joe didn't use that -- he was out in the middle, talking with the people around him. he was part of the group.

You know, I remember the story of a typical American butter-and-egg guy that went on a tour in France. And they went to the Mona Lisa. And then came to -- not the Mona Lisa, the Mona Lisa's what they came to. It's in the -- what's the art gallery.

Q: The Louvre.

APPLEY: The Louvre. And the tour got to the Louvre. And they came to the Mona Lisa. And the point out: this is the Mona Lisa. And this butter-and-egg guy from here said: that's the Mona Lisa? The guys said, yes. He said: gee, she

ain't so hot, is she. And he says, sir, the Mona Lisa isn't on trial.

And Joe Juran was never on trial. He was the Mona Lisa of his work. He was the Mona Lisa of his philosophy. He was the best. *And* he was never on trial. He might of thought he was. That was part of his humility, and part of the quality of his work, but he really never was.

(END OF TAPE 11, START TAPE 12)

APPLEY: Well, there are people who call those who are doctors, doctor as a matter of respect. And probably would always call Joe, doctor. But if you became a friend of Joe's, you just didn't. It's hard for me to explain, but I can't imagine myself calling Joe, doctor. We didn't have that kind of relationship.

That's the Herr Doktor, that's the German. And when I go to Germany, I'm always Herr Doktor to everybody, whether I'm a doctor or not, I mean, that's the phrase for professor.

And Joe is so human and his knowledge is so real, that some people, just out of respect, call him doctor. But those who're friends of his, call him Joe.

Q: What's the best thing you can say?

APPLEY: I would say that Joe Juran has made a lot of people better for having known him. He's just somebody that you -- you want to know, and you're enriched by knowing. And I think he is gratified by the realization that a lot of people are better because they've known him.

You know there're some characters in life that it's hard to say what is the greatest contribution. It's just difficult, because they're whole people, they're just good people.

I'm looking at the sign over on that wall. It says: age is not important unless you're a cheese. And, well, age is a lot more important than that. That's a wisecrack. But age does something to a person. They -- well, I shouldn't talk about it,

probably, because I'm not a youngster myself.

Q: Is he different at 87 than 40 years ago?

APPLEY: Well, I haven't seen him in 20 years, I'll bet he isn't. I'll bet he isn't any difference except he's had more experience, he's added to his knowledge. And I can't imagine Joe being any different -- except that he knows more and he's had more experience. And you can't live to a ripe old age without that taking place.

Q: What have I not asked you?

APPLEY: What was your question?

Q: What should people remember about him?

APPLEY: I don't know that I can add anything to what I said. I wish I could.

Q: This goes in the time capsule.

APPLEY: What's your question?

Q: Discussing him for the time capsule.

APPLEY: Now what's your question? There's the time capsule, there's the film.

Q: Your comment about Joe Juran.

APPLEY: Well, I've made a lot of them. And -- Joe Juran is a very fine person. And he is very knowledgeable. And he is a good teacher. And he is a good friend. And he is a leader. And he's a manager. He's a whole person.

Now, if you should ask me what is his weakness, I'd tell you I don't know of any. Unless modesty is a weakness. I

don't know whether it is.

When I was on the faculty here at Colgate, we had a head of the psychology department by the name of Laird. And he used to teach his students: if you want to be famous, keep people talking about you -- good, bad, or indifferent. Doesn't make any difference. Just keep them talking about you, and you'll be famous.

You never can say that to Joe Juran. Because he would be very sensitive to any remarks about him that were not good. He'd be very sensitive to it. And he certainly wouldn't do it just to be famous. That's Joe.

And let me say: I don't know anybody else like Joe. And there probably isn't anybody who knows as many management people in this world as I do.

There was a meeting in Hershey, Pennsylvania, a couple of months ago, of top executives with whom I have worked. And it was a room full of people I knew very well, and respected very well. And I can't think of anyone of them that I'd put above Joe.

Q: Why is he so different, sets him apart?

APPLEY: How can I say it differently from what I had said.

You think -- you ask, what's different about President Bush. And I can tell you very quickly what's different about him, and what I think is different about him, but I don't know him. It's just an impression. You are very challenging, and I'll wake up about 2:00 o'clock tomorrow morning and have the answer. I'll call you tomorrow.

But what's different about Joe Jurn, he is different. That's what's different about him. And his difference is good. Hitler was different, but it wasn't good. And this guy over in the Middle East is different, but he's a bad man.

Q: Thank you.

APPLEY: Well, God bless you, I appreciate your patience.

Q: I'm glad I challenged you.

(END **OF** TAPE 12)

